

VZCZCXRO9299  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHIHL #0130/01 2700729  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
P 270729Z SEP 07  
FM REO HILLAH  
TO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0858  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0949  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE  
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 1013

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000130

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/27/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: NAJAF GOVERNOR: MARJA'IYYA CONTRIBUTING TO PEACE

REF: A) HILLAH 126; B) HILLAH 86; C) HILLAH 125

HILLAH 00000130 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Angus Simmons, Team Leader, PRT Najaf, DOS.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Najaf cable.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY: During a September 22 meeting with PRT and CF, the Governor of Najaf noted that the reports AMB Crocker and General Petraeus recently submitted to Congress failed to acknowledge the contribution of the marja'iyya to the peace and stability of Iraq. The Governor called for a meeting between the governors of the south central provinces and Ambassador Crocker and demanded an explanation of claims by Ayed Allawi that the USG is seeking to install notorious Baathists in the GoI. Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), the Governor said, are investigating the recent assassinations of Ayatollah al-Sistani associates and are coordinating with Coalition Forces preparations for the October 3 anniversary of the death of Imam Ali. The Najaf Governor and Provincial Council (PC) Chair also discussed reconstruction issues ranging from the Najaf Airport Project (NAP) to the establishment of a Najaf cultural center. END SUMMARY.

-----  
NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL POLITICS  
-----

¶3. (C) During a September 22 meeting at the Najaf Governorate Compound, Najaf Governor Asaad Sulmaan Abu Gelal Al-Ta'ie, Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), told PRT Team Leader and MiTT 0800 Chief that the September testimony to Congress by Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus failed to acknowledge the contribution of the marja'iyya to the peace and stability of Iraq. Following up on a similar conversation from September 16 (ref A), al-Ta'ie noted that the marja'iyya strongly and actively supported elections and the overall political process in Iraq, yet no reference was made to that. Furthermore, he said, by listening to the perspectives of political actors in Iraq and promoting reconciliation and stability, the marja'iyya act as a "safety valve" for political pressure. The Governor acknowledged to PRT Team Leader that no ayatollah has directly raised the issue with him. However, as the Governor makes the rounds of Ramadan Iftar parties, he is hearing many agents of the marja'iyya publicly complaining about this omission, and one easily can deduce that the issue is on the minds of the marja'iyya, al-Ta'ie explained.

¶4. (C) The Governor noted that four months had passed since Ambassador Crocker met with the south central governors at REO Hillah, and he stressed that it was time for another meeting, although refrained from offering a specific agenda for

discussion. Al-Ta'ie, however, was visibly upset over reports that USG officials had instructed former Prime Minister Ayed Allawi to travel to Saudi Arabia to encourage Izzat Ibrahim ad-Douri and Mohamed Younis al-Ahmed al-Muwali (Comment: This rumor is ludicrous, but it clearly has some currency, having been reported as well in the local press. End Comment.) to return to Iraq and join the GOI. Ad-Douri and al-Muwali are murderers (Comment: which is why they are on coalition force high value target lists. End Comment.), the Governor insisted, and he demanded to know if the report was true. If the statements are accurate, al-Ta'ie said, it would cause Iraqis to lose trust in the USG, adding that USG silence on the matter will be interpreted as confirmation of the veracity of the allegations. PRT Team Leader responded that he had heard of no such plan, speculated personally that he found it highly unlikely, and noted that Ad-Douri was high in the wanted figures in the original "deck of cards." Responding to Team Leader's clarification follow-up question, the governor confirmed that the he and his Najaf compatriots were not complaining about efforts to achieve reconciliation with low level Baathists who had joined the Baath Party to get by and not out of any conviction or loyalty to Sadaam.

15. (C) With respect to the controversy over Blackwater, he noted that it was important for Blackwater to be seen paying compensation and doing the right thing for the families.

-----  
SECURITY IN NAJAF  
-----

16. (S) Al-Ta'ie expressed his concern over assassinations earlier in the week in Diwaniyah and Basra of representatives of Ayatollah al-Sistani. The killings follow three similar assassinations of al-Sistani associates over recent months, two of which took place in Najaf. Al-Ta'ie asked PRT Team Leader to assure Ambassador Crocker that the ISF are taking the matter very seriously and are investigating. (Note: PRT Najaf locally engaged staff told PRToff that Najafis increasingly are

HILLAH 00000130 002.2 OF 002

attributing the assassination campaign of al-Sistani associates to Iran. Allegations of an Iranian campaign to assassinate them in order to exert Iranian control over the marja'iyya have been circulating for months (ref B)).

17. (C) The Governor announced that security preparations are on-going in anticipation of the October 3 anniversary of the death of Imam Ali, during which hundreds of thousands of Shi'a faithful will converge on Najaf. Al-Ta'ie expressed his determination to avoid a repeat of the recent violence in Karbala, and provided MiTT 0800 Chief with a list of 33 requested security items.

PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT, PC PUBLIC OUTREACH  
-----

18. (SBU) The Governor touched on a number of provincial development issues. First, he expressed the hope that in the near future, Najaf would construct a cultural center for the fine arts and theatre. On the issue of the Najaf Airport Project (NAP), al-Ta'ie explained that Najaf officials would seek to open the airport as quickly as possible (ref C), and defer expenditures that were not necessary to permit a bare bones, no frills opening of the airport for landing and taking off. (Comment: This would appear to include a decision not to widen the runway - a position supported by the Deputy Governor who is pushing hard to get the airport open and operational at a basic level. This position appears largely driven by funding and timing concerns. End Comment.)

19. (SBU) PRT Team Leader noted that the Boeing report on the airport would be available in the very near future, and that there was now considerable interest in working cooperatively and

expeditiously on the project. Team Leader suggested that it would be good to meet as soon as the report was available to make basic decisions of what would constitute a sensible minimum approach for phase one, but that it would be wise to ensure that decisions were not made early on that would foreclose future options or result in far greater expenditures (i.e. not widening the runway) and delays later if things that should be done initially were not done. On a separate topic, the Governor welcomed any visit by representatives of the Department of Defense Task Force Business Stability Operations Iraq to the Najaf Cement factory. Concerning the proposed conference on tourism, al-Ta'ie and Najaf PC Chair Abdul Hussein Mousa Aboud al-Mosawi, Independent Flag, agreed that the PC's Tourism Committee would take the lead on working with PRT Najaf to draft an agenda and set the date and venue.

¶10. (SBU) PRTOffs presented to al-Mosawi and a representative from the Najaf Reconstruction Council (NRC) a plan to increase public awareness of, and participation in, the business of the Najaf PC and NRC. Al-Mosawi welcomed the public outreach initiative, a key element of Najaf Joint Common Plan. In particular, the PC Chair expressed an eagerness to work with PRT Najaf on the creation of a media office within the PC. He further asked for assistance in resuscitating the PC's bi-monthly newspaper, and in creating a guide to Najaf that would highlight reconstruction successes and tourist destinations. Finally, he noted that a large conference hall would allow the PC to hold town hall meetings and joint sessions with the municipal councils. Al-Mosawi suggested that such a conference center could be combined with the Governor's proposed cultural center.

¶11. (C) COMMENT: The Governor was visibly upset by the possibility that the USG would consider reaching out to former Baathist leaders reviled by the Shi'a population of Najaf. His thoughts and suggestions concerning the omission from the Congressional reports of the contributions of the marja'iyya, the meeting between the Ambassador and the south central governors, and even the Blackwater events, took a faintly admonishing tone. END COMMENT.  
SIMMONS